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Notes on Wenlock Priory.

Although not to be classed among the most important of monastic ruins in England, the beautiful remains of Wenlock Priory are certainly among the most interesting. Some of their features are, I believe, unique, and it seems at least strange that they should until recently have attracted so little attention. In Sharpe's "Architectural Parallels" a few details of capitals and bases and plans of piers from Wenlock are given, but no elevations. The prior's lodge is carefully described in Turner and Parker's "Domestic Architecture in England," Vol. III., p. 145 and pp. 366-371, but the remarkable Norman chapter house had, until 1888,* never, I believe, been published, the exquisitely beautiful lavatory in the cloister is nowhere mentioned (its discovery is comparatively recent), and the church itself, up to 1884, had never been measured and drawn. When I visited the place, in the summer of that year, with the intention of making as complete drawings of the priory as my time would allow, it happened, by a strange coincidence, that two other students of architecture, like minded with myself, were there nearly at the same time; and from one of them, Mr. John E. Newberry, of London, I received a good deal of assistance in taking measurements.†

Much Wenlock (to distinguish it from Little Wenlock) lies in the southern part of Shropshire, on high ground above the Severn valley, and not many miles from the river. The quiet little town, nestling among low hills in a beautiful agricultural region, is exceedingly picturesque, with its old parish church of every period from Norman to perpendicular, its quaint, half-timbered Guildhall and manor, and its low, gray, cosy stone houses. But, even as seen from the hills, the tall, gaunt ruins of the priory church on the edge of the town form the most characteristic feature of the place. The prior's lodge is still in perfect preservation, and is now the residence of C. M. Gaskell, Esq., to whom the whole priory belongs. A part of his garden, with its roses and hollyhocks and a wealth of other flowers, occupies the site of the great cloister. Where once the monks pored over their folios, his pigeons live in the old vaulted muniment room, or make their nests in the triforium arches of the church, while the peacocks proudly strut across the lawn which occupies the nave, and Angora cats come purring and rubbing up against one as he sits sketching, and enjoying the bright sunshine, the fine old architecture, the scent of the jasmine and roses, and the music of the church bells tolling from the rude Norman church tower in the village close by.

Perhaps, before giving any description of the remains of the convent, it may be well to give a short sketch of so much as is

known of its history. According to a tradition, not chronicled until some four hundred years after the event, the first monastic foundation on this site dates back to the earliest days of Saxon Christianity. The Princess Milburga of Mercia, whose name the monastery ever afterward bore, is said to have founded a nunnery here in 680,* and to have been herself the first abbess, and was buried in her own church. This foundation hardly lasted two hundred years. When the Danes conquered and overran Mercia in 874, the nuns fled, and the convent was entirely destroyed. A second monastery for monks, with a college for secular clergy, was founded in the reign of Canute the Dane, probably between 1017 and 1035, by that Earl Leofric whose wife, well known in legend, was Lady Godiva. "Leofric and his wife Godiva," says William of Malmesbury, "generous in their deeds toward God, built many monasteries, as Coventry, St. Mary's at Stow, Wenlock, Leon, and some others." Wealthy and powerful as this second Saxon house is said to have been, it seems to have perished at the time of the Norman invasion.

After the turmoil had passed and England was recovering from the effects of the struggle under the iron rule of those energetic organizers, the Normans, we know with what astonishing rapidity castles, churches, and abbeys sprang up on every hand. Encouraged by William, his nobles vied with one another, not only in fortifying themselves, but in endowing monasteries and building churches. This part of England was under the government of Roger Montgomeri, Earl of Shrewsbury and Arundel, a cousin of the Conqueror, and about the year 1080 Wenlock Priory was refounded by him for monks of the order of Cluny. The new monastery was in need of a patron saint, and we have the usual miraculous story of the discovery of the saint's body, which is thus related by William of Malmesbury, who, after some accounts of the saint, thus continues: "Milburga reposes at Wenlock; formerly she was well known to the neighboring inhabitants, but for some time after the arrival of the Normans, through ignorance of the place of her burial, she was neglected. Lately, however, a convent of Cluniac monks being established there, while a new church was erecting, a certain boy, running violently along the pavement, broke into the hollow of the vault and discovered the body of the virgin; when a balsamic odor pervading the whole church, she was taken up, and performed so many miracles that the people flocked thither in great multitudes."†

Wenlock was made immediately subordinate to the Cluniac priory of La Charité-sur-Loire,‡ itself founded in 1055 by the great abbot of Cluny, St. Hugh, under whom the order began to reach

* In that year measured drawings of the chapter house, by Mr. Locke Worthington, who arrived at Wenlock before I left, were published in *Building*. † His drawings, comprising single bays of the east and south walls of the south transept of the priory church, and a general plan of the group of buildings, have since been published in the "Architectural Association Sketch Book of London," Vol. VI., New Series.

* Sir G. F. Duckett's charters and records of the Ancient Abbey of Cluny, Vol. II., p. 137, note; and William of Malmesbury's *Chronicle*, p. 243, J. A. Giles' trans., Bohn's ed. † Bohn's ed., p. 243. ‡ Duckett, Vol. I., p. 196.

its greatest power. Already it had its dependencies in all parts of Europe, its abbots were the councillors and arbitrators of kings; but under St. Hugh the number of Clunisian foundations was greatly increased, and its power and influence augmented.

William the Conqueror, conscious, doubtless, of the great civilizing and organizing power of the order, called upon the abbot of Cluny to direct the government of religious affairs in England.* About three years before the Cluniac foundation of Wenlock, viz., in 1077, William de Warrenne, Earl of Suffolk, had founded the priory of St. Pancras of Lewes directly under the headship of the abbey of Cluny, and from that time it remained the principal English foundation of the order, and its prior was generally appointed vicar-general of the order in England. Next to Lewes, Wenlock was probably the most important Cluniac foundation in England, as it was certainly the principal cell of the priory of La Charité. At the time of the foundation of Wenlock, Cîteaux (founded 1098), the head of the great Cistercian order, afterward so important in England, had not yet been established. It is especially in contrast with the great Cistercian abbeys of the island, that Wenlock is of interest, as one of the representative houses of the older order.

A chart of the Clunisian monasteries of England, drawn up by an English hand in 1450 (according to Duckett, "probably much earlier"),† still exists, and gives the names of all the English and Scotch houses with their connections. From this it appears that there were in all two abbeys and thirty-eight priories. At the time of the suppression of the monasteries in 1539, the English Cluniac affiliations alone numbered about thirty-five. "Of these some were directly subject to the mother house, others were subordinate to the abbey of La Charité-sur-Loire, and some to that of St. Martin-des-Champs at Paris." La Charité had two cells in England, Wenlock and Bermondsey, and both of these had cells subordinate to themselves. Those of Wenlock were the priories of Preen in Shropshire, St. Helen's in the Isle of Wight, and Dudley in Staffordshire. The abbey of Paisley, in Scotland, was originally founded in 1163-4, as a cell of Wenlock priory (Humbold or Winibald being then prior), by the first of the Stewarts, Walter Fitz Alan, baron of Renfrew, who colonized it with monks from Wenlock, the new priory being dedicated to Saints Mary, James, Milburga, and Mirin. Later, however, it was elevated to the rank of an abbey, and made immediately subject to Cluny. The table above referred to gives the annual tribute due to Cluny from each of its subordinate houses as two marks sterling. In addition to this, Cluny had an income, according to the same table, of "*circa sexcentum scuta auri et ultra*," from four manors which the abbey owned in England. Even taking into account the great difference in values,‡ the income of the abbey of Cluny, from its English estates and affiliations, would seem not to have been very large.

The arrangement of the Cluniac foundations in Great Britain gives some idea of the general arrangement and extent of the order in other parts of Europe. It was, in fact, a huge, scattered commonwealth, with the abbot of Cluny at its head, exercising all the powers of a temporal prince, even to the coining of money.

"In order to govern these establishments scattered over the whole territory of Western Europe, general chapters were instituted. At stated and frequent intervals the superiors and delegates of the monasteries came together at the call of the abbot from all parts of Italy, of Germany, of France, of Aquitaine, of Spain, of Portugal, of England, of Hungary, of Poland."

"It was the will of St. Benedict that in all important matters the abbot should consult the whole community. This wise

precaution, this kind of monastic liberty, was transferred on a grand scale to the immense congregation of Cluny. At the general chapter the interests and spiritual needs of the cloister were discussed, as the councils discussed the interests and needs of the church. Account was rendered of the condition of each community. All were grouped in monastic provinces, and the general chapter, before separating, named two visitors for each of these provinces. Their duty was to go thither to insure the execution of the measures decreed in the general chapter, to see close at hand the condition of things, to listen and receive at need the complaints of the feeble, and to regulate all things there for welfare and peace."* Attendance at these general chapters was compulsory on the part of the priors, except by special leave of absence from the abbot. Priors at a great distance, however, were sometimes required to attend only every two or three years. Letters of excuse for non-attendance from the prior of Wenlock to the abbot of Cluny are in existence for the years 1239 and 1242. A number of reports of "visitors" of the province of England are extant, in some of which there are curious notices of Wenlock, and in these the names of several priors are given. In the visitation of 1262 the prior of Wenlock is not mentioned by name, being probably too well known. (He was Prior Aymo, as we know from a royal license to bring some sixty acres of forest into cultivation.) His companions, who went with him to London to report on the condition of the monastery, were "*Galterus camerarius et frater Philippus grenetarius de Wenloc*." There were forty-four monks in the priory at that time.

The reports generally concern themselves with religious affairs, the observation of the rules of the order in various particulars, especially that of silence, the number of inmates, the debts and receipts of the priories, almsgiving, the masses, etc. Unfortunately, there is rarely any mention of buildings, and if mentioned, it is merely a perfunctory "*Ædificia bona sunt*."

In 1275 we find John, prior of Wenlock, one of the visitors associated with Arnulf, constable of the lord abbot. At Wenlock we find them referring to a recent visitation of the priory on the part of the superior house of La Charité. There were then forty-two monks in the priory and three *fratres conversi*, lay brothers, belonging generally to the villein class, who performed menial services for the monks. In 1279 we find the visitors, while stating that they find the thirty-five monks "*honeste et regulariter viventes, divina bene facientes*," complaining that there used to be forty or more, and laying the blame, apparently, on that same prior John who was one of the visitors in 1275. They further accuse him of overstating the indebtedness of the monastery, and using its revenues in an attempt to get elected to the see of Rochester, and so "*evadere manus Cluniacenses. Vidimus magnum periculum imminere*," they conclude.

By the Norman kings and the early Plantagenets the monasteries of Cluniac and Cistercian foundation were protected and encouraged. Richard I., in 1198, conceded by charter, dated at Roche Andeley on the Seine, important privileges and immunities to the priory of Wenlock. King Henry III. was frequently at Wenlock during his wars with the Welsh, and in 1236, 1237, and 1238 there are charges on the pipe-roll for conveying the king's wines to Wenlock. Humbert, or Imbert, who was prior at this time, was sent on diplomatic missions by the king twice in 1232, once in 1236. In 1244 he was one of the commissioners for negotiating a truce with David, son of Llewelyn, Prince of Wales. Later than this, however, we find the kings looking with disfavor on the alien priories. The loss of the French provinces had already taken place under John, and the union of the Norman and English races, making England really English, brought about a very different state of things from that which existed under

* Viollet-le-Duc, Dictionnaire, art. Architecture monastique, p. 254. † Duckett, I., p. 196. ‡ The value of the "*scuta auri*" is given by Burckhardt as from eleven to twelve francs, and the value of wheat in Lombardy in the middle of the fifteenth century, as compared with the middle of the present century, as three to eight. Duckett gives the value of the *scuta* as over thirteen francs. Renaissance in Italy, p. 79, Middlemore's translation.

* Cluny au XIe Siècle, by Abbé Cucherat, quoted in Viollet-le-Duc, Dictionnaire, Vol. I., p. 254.

Henry II., when, for instance, Wenlock's superior house of La Charité was itself situated in a province of the English king, and that king was himself a foreigner. From the time of Edward I., the alien priories seem to have been regarded as lawful prey by the kings, who doubtless regarded the jurisdiction exercised by a foreign abbey as an interference with their rights, and the estates of these priories were constantly confiscated, especially during foreign wars, then again restored, only to be again confiscated, until they were either finally suppressed or ceased to be alien. In 1286 the priory of Lewes was confiscated as alien. In 1327 the lands of sixty-four alien priories, which had been previously seized on account of the war in Aquitaine, were restored to them. In 1337, at the time when King Edward III. invaded France, the revenues of alien priories were seized, especially those of the Cluniac and Cistercian orders. In 1345 the priory of Totnes and thirty-one other alien priories were summoned in respect of an annual tenth. In 1351 a charter of denizenship or naturalization was given to Lewes and five subordinate houses. In 1361, restitution was made to alien priories of land taken from them twenty years before.* Apparently as early as 1279 there seems to have been some feeling of resentment of foreign domination on the part of the monks themselves, for in the visitation of that year we find the inmates of the priory of Monk-Bretton refusing admittance to the visitors, and when, with the help of the king's authority, admittance was gained, the monks refused to appear for examination, pleading the absence of their prior. The visitors excommunicated them all with apparently little effect; nor is this instance an isolated one. But the king's exactions of themselves probably made the monks glad enough to get charters of denizenship. Wenlock doubtless suffered with the rest in these confiscations. In 1380 we find Wenlock in the king's hands, when an extent of its possessions was taken, and in 1388 (11 R. II.) it was declared indigenous and received its charter of denizenship. This does not, however, seem to have severed its spiritual connection with the parent house of Cluny, for on the 9th of August, 1412, the prior of Lewes writes to the abbot of Cluny recommending that another be appointed in his stead as vicar of the order in England, and he recommends among others the prior of Wenlock to undertake the negotiations for the sale of the abbey's English manors. The abbot of Cluny hesitates too long about this sale, and they are finally confiscated by King Henry V. two years before the battle of Agincourt, when one hundred and ten alien priories were confiscated and their revenues given to the crown. In the following reign (1457), Cluny tried to regain possession of its English manors and power over its affiliations, but it was declared that for some time past the subordinate houses had been naturalized or made denizen and discharged from subjection to the parent abbey. A last attempt was made by an appeal to the king, but its monasteries were released from all further subjection and obedience to it. It was not, however, until 1494 that the papal sanction was given by a bull of Pope Alexander VI. to the liberation of the Wenlock house from its subjection to foreign ones.

These notices are of interest, as showing the close connection of the English Cluniac priories with France until the end of the fourteenth century, and would lead us to expect their architecture to be influenced by this connection; and we shall find at Wenlock at least one remarkable example of evidently French work in the lavatory.

At the time of the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII. in 1539, the gross annual revenues of Wenlock were valued at £481 16s. 3d. The number of monks had dwindled to eleven beside the prior and subprior. The final surrender by

which the prior and subprior, "of their own free will" and in elaborate legal phrase, resign the priory into the hands of the king, is dated Jan. 26, 1539. Prior and monks were pensioned off with £100 per annum, the prior having £30, and the subprior and monks sharing the rest. The priory at this time came into the possession of Thomas Lawley, Esq., who did homage for the site. By inheritance and sales the place finally came into the possession of its present owner.

A tradition current in Much Wenlock ascribes the original destruction of the priory church to a party of Cromwellian soldiers, who wantonly plied it with artillery while passing along the neighboring hills. Since then it seems to have been used as a quarry, as so many fine old buildings have been in all parts of Europe. The prior's lodge seems to have been continuously used as a residence, and though slightly altered, remains substantially, both within and without, as it was when built in the fifteenth century. In spite of the ravages of time and the wanton and greater destruction by man, enough remains of the monastic buildings to give a very complete idea of what they must have been, as may be seen from the accompanying plan. The priory was surrounded by a wall, and was entered at the west through a great gate flanked by huge towers, one of which is still standing. From the rude character of its masonry and from its round arched openings, this must be one of the oldest parts of the priory. Almost opposite this gate tower and about two hundred feet away is the west end of the church, to the south of which the principal monastic buildings were grouped about the great cloister. The elevations given on the accompanying plates show the most important remains of the monastery except the prior's lodge, and the remnants of the north transept and the west end. The cloister itself is only just traceable; but in one corner the exceedingly interesting remains of the lavatory (which will be noticed in detail in a later paper) stand opposite the entrance to the refectory, a doorway of beautiful early pointed design and the only architectural feature which still remains of this building. The refectory occupies the position usual in Clunisian monasteries, running east and west nearly parallel with the nave, and on the south side of the cloister. In Cistercian monasteries the refectory occupies the same position in the cloister, but its length extends north and south at right angles to the nave. The strangely irregular position of the refectory which prevents the cloister from being rectangular, as it usually is, seems without explanation either in the site, which is perfectly level, or in the position of the buildings. On the west side of the cloister stood, in all probability, the dormitory buildings, in their usual position. Of these nothing remains, save a few irregular traces of foundation walls. On the opposite east side, as shown in the elevation, is the chapter house built close against the south transept of the church, and against the west wall of this transept is a narrow but comparatively lofty vaulted chamber, which may probably have been the *colloquii locus*. "The most absolute silence being required of the monks, a special place was reserved for necessary conversation"* or it may have been the *armariolum*, the place of deposit of the monks' prayer-books. On the southeast of the great cloister was a somewhat smaller quadrangle, two sides of which are occupied by the prior's lodge. The buildings on the third and fourth sides have disappeared.

On the southeast corner of the prior's quadrangle is a building of very plain construction, and still in perfect preservation. It may perhaps have been the infirmary, or the guest house.

In the northwest corner of the great cloister is a steep flight of stone steps leading to a vaulted chamber situated over the first three bays of the south aisle of the nave, which are vaulted low in order to give this room (whose vaults run as high as the top

* Duckett, I., 31, 32.

* Viollet-le-Duc, Dictionnaire, Vol. I., p. 268.

of the triforium) greater height. This chamber, which is well lighted on the side of the cloister, was probably the muniment room or library of the monastery. As already stated, it is now used as a pigeon-cote. From near the foot of the flight of steps leading to this chamber a pointed doorway in three orders, of which the two outer ones have detached shafts, leads from the cloister into the church. There was probably also another door to the nave from the east walk of the cloister; but the church wall at this point is destroyed. The plan of the church is curiously like, both in dimensions and arrangement, that of the Cistercian abbey of Whitby on the Yorkshire coast. The length of the Wenlock priory church is 280 feet (exclusive of the later Lady chapel); that of Whitby, 291 feet inside. As at Whitby, nave and choir are about equal in length, both churches have aisles on the east side of the transepts only. In Wenlock the chapels in the north transept are still clearly traceable; the floor here is raised above what was evidently the level of the rest of the floor, and there are some remains of a pavement of small tiles. In the south transept, though all trace of the chapels has disappeared, the fact that the only remaining base on the east wall of the south transept aisle is six inches higher than all the others, would seem to indicate clearly that the pavement here also was raised, and that there were chapels similar to those of the north transept. The number of bays in nave, choir, and transepts is the same in both churches, and both have a north porch to the nave, of which at Wenlock only the foundations and a clustered base remain. Wenlock had, in addition, a Lady chapel, at the east end of which remains, to the height of about three feet, only the massive and well-cut base course, whose mouldings would indicate that this was added early in the fifteenth century.

The oldest part of the church was the choir, of which only indications of walls remain and bases of circular columns apparently of early Norman style. But the easternmost pier on the south side of the choir was clustered, and a fragment of base remains of good Attic form with a griffe at the angle. The other pier bases in the choir are, with one or two exceptions, shapeless mounds, and it is not clear whether the clustered and circular piers alternated, as in the nave of Furness, or not. A little excavation would probably determine this. Opening from the south aisle of the choir remain the foundations of a tiny Gothic sacristy with a bit of wall attached in so puzzling a way, that it seemed impossible to determine what its function was and to what it can have belonged. On the west side of the north transept, the west wall of which still stands to nearly its full height, is a small crypt, above which was perhaps another sacristy opening from the nave. The church seems to have had but a single tower, viz., at the crossing. It seems probable that the choir, chapter house, and the north wing of the prior's lodge date from the time of the Norman foundation by Roger Montgomeri, in 1080.

Not only does the plan very much resemble Whitby, but the style of the nave and transepts, which is "Early English" Gothic, and probably dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century, also bears a strong resemblance to that church, the plans of the piers being strikingly similar. But the central aisle of the nave of Wenlock was vaulted, while Whitby had a timber ceiling, and the walls of Wenlock are therefore much heavier, the thrust of the vaults in these English monastic buildings being taken entirely by the walls. The exterior of Wenlock was very plain, except the west front, which had a wide doorway of large dimensions for an English church, in four orders with detached shafts and an inner single moulded order; above this was a huge traceried window, of which only one jamb still remains, flanked by a blank arcade. Except this remnant of the west end, which has evidently been preserved by the heavy construction required by the muniment room over the aisle, the most important remnant of

the church is the south transept, an admirably proportioned piece of architecture with simple but carefully studied detail.

One noteworthy and curious arrangement of this transept is the manner in which the architectural features of the south wall are embedded in the wall of the previously existing chapter house. The naïve, and yet entirely successful, way in which the difficulty is met of getting the three bays of the transept into the comparatively narrow space left between the chapter house and the central tower, is both interesting and instructive. Instead of narrowing all three bays, and thus belittling the motive, the two first bays are made of the desired proportions, while the one next the chapter house has a pier arch in the ground story of the same size as the others (it is even half an inch larger than the first one), its pier being embedded in the chapter house wall, while the triforium arches above, where such crowding into the wall would have been more objectionable, are thrown frankly out of centre and are made narrower than their neighbors. Yet the impression they give looked at from the nave is of three entirely similar bays. The north transept, of course, does not have this irregularity. Only its western wall is still standing, and of this only the central bay remains entire.*

The transepts, like the nave, were vaulted with quadripartite vaults having transverse, diagonal, and wall ribs all springing from the same level. The thrusts being taken by the massive walls instead of by flying buttresses, there was no occasion to stilt the wall ribs as is done in French Gothic. The walls are five feet thick, and have passages in their thickness at both clerestory and triforium levels. The former are continuous, the latter run out on each side the main piers into the space over the aisle vaults, thus giving passage round the church without weakening the main piers. There are remains of circular stone staircases in the thickness of the wall at the northern end of the west walls of both transepts, as indicated in the plan. Here at Wenlock, as in most English Gothic buildings, the vaulting shafts are not run to the ground, but are stopped on corbels below the triforium string. The English architect recognized the fact that his vaults were supported by his walls, and conceived of the vault weights as gradually transferred to the walls, as is expressed by the curious but exceedingly delicate form of these Wenlock corbels. He was doubtless influenced also by the desire of obtaining an unbroken arcade in his ground story.

It is interesting to note the influence of the wooden construction of the earlier buildings on the forms of vault supports. In France, where these supports of the early timber roofs were carried directly to the ground, this form came to be preferred for vault supports. In England, though this arrangement was also common, timber roofs were frequently supported on corbels from which wooden uprights were carried to the under side of the trusses, as in the magnificent hall of Oakham Castle, which dates from about 1180. Stone shafts in other examples replace the wooden uprights. This arrangement doubtless suggested to the English builders a similar arrangement of vault supports.

It will be seen from this description that there are no indications of marked French influence in the portions that still remain of the church of Wenlock priory, except perhaps in the unusually large size of the doorway and in the character of some of the carving, which, though simple and not profusely used, is unusually delicate and fine in quality for English work.

The resemblance of the design to the much richer one of the church of Whitby, and to the north transept of Rievaulx, and to some extent to other examples, would seem to point to an intimate connection between the builders of these churches belonging to different orders, whether they were the work of monkish builders, or of lay builders in the employ of the monasteries.

*See note on Plate VIII.

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Notes on Wenlock Priory.

SECOND ARTICLE.

Interesting as are the ruins of the priory church at Wenlock and the perfectly preserved prior's lodge (unique in its way), there is yet a small construction in the corner of what was once the cloister which surpasses in unique interest as it does in beauty of detail anything else within the old conventual precincts. We refer to the lavabo already mentioned in a previous article, and shown on plan in Plate VI., No. 1, of this journal.

Among the smaller constructions of early mediæval art, few can have been more interesting or more beautiful than the lavabos or lavatories in many of the cloisters of the monastic orders, and it is the more to be regretted that only in rare instances have even their fragments been preserved to this day. Some were of very simple form, and some elaborate and highly decorated. Judging from the examples and fragments that remain, the earlier lavabos were more beautiful and had more attention given to their design than the later ones. The lavabo was generally placed, as at Wenlock, near the entrance to the refectory, as its purpose was to serve as a place of ablution for the monks before going in to meals. The Cistercians, especially, but also the Clunians, during the twelfth century, were largely occupied in rough manual labor, so that the lavabo was a matter of necessity during this period, when the monasteries were performing one of their greatest uses in bringing new lands, forests, and marshes under cultivation, and making fair fields and gardens out of the wilderness. The monks returned from their work with hands soiled, and a convenient and ready means of washing before entering the refectory or the church had to be provided. It is, therefore, to the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries that the finest examples of the lavabo belong. Viollet-le-Duc, in the article on this subject in his "Dictionnaire de l'Architecture Française," says the convents of Spain possessed magnificent lavabos, whose existence he ascribes in part to the influence of the neighboring Arabic establishments in which an abundance of water was considered of first necessity. "It is also," he continues, "in the South of France that the best arranged and the most spacious lavabos were formerly found. It is to be regretted that these halls, which lent themselves so well to architectural treatment, should have been everywhere destroyed, since before the end of the last century, by the monks themselves, who no longer submitted to the custom of washing at the same moment and in company." Sometimes, but generally in the later examples, the lavatory was placed in the centre of the cloister garth as at Durham (A. D. 1432) (formerly this basin was enclosed in an octagonal building), or along one of the walls of the cloister under the shelter of the arcade as at Gloucester (15th century), or Norwich (14th century), or in the refectory itself. Lavatories were sometimes placed in other dependencies of the great churches, as in the choristers' vestry at Lincoln (A. D. 1350). Sometimes the lavatory became little more than a piece of furniture, of marble, of stone (as at Lincoln), or of bronze. But in the earlier

times the lavabo was generally a veritable fountain, placed in a separate building, in one corner, as at Wenlock, or more usually in the middle of one side of the cloister, as at Le Thoronet, opening from it, opposite the refectory door. Of these earlier, more elaborate, and more beautiful constructions but few fragments remain. Viollet-le-Duc mentions two such lavabos in France of which enough traces still exist to show clearly their arrangement, viz., those of the abbey du Thoronet (Var) and the abbey of Fontenay (Côte d'Or), while the basin alone remains of the lavabo of St. Denis, and of the abbey of Pontigny (Yonne). At Le Thoronet the building containing the fountain still exists in perfect preservation. Viollet-le-Duc speaks of the basin as having disappeared, but when I visited Le Thoronet in 1885 I found fragments of a perfectly plain basin, which I measured, lying among the *débris* in the lavatory building. This building is hexagonal in plan, and stands in the middle of one side of the cloister opening from it directly opposite the refectory door. A plan and section of this building are given, taken from Viollet-le-Duc (A, Plate XLVIII.).

The position of the lavabo of the abbey of Fontenay is similar to that of Le Thoronet, but the building itself is square and more elaborate, and the construction of the lavabo most curious. The plan (fig. 1) and restored view (B, Plate XLVIII.) (taken on the section line "a-b" of the plan) are also taken from the "Dictionnaire." Viollet-le-Duc says that in 1844 the fragments of the piers of this hall were found in the *débris*, and the plan could still be traced. The entrances were still in place. It would seem that in making the restoration, which we give, Viollet-le-Duc must have used, as the basis from which to reconstruct the vanished basin of Fontenay, the exquisitely beautiful basin of St. Denis (fig. 2) which may now be seen in the second court of the École des Beaux-Arts at Paris, and which dates from the thirteenth century. The basin, only, is part of the mediæval lavabo. The pedestal on which it now rests is of later Renaissance date, and had originally no connection with it. Besides these may be mentioned the traces of a lavabo at the hospital of St. Jean at Angers. Directly in front of the door of this hospital are to be seen the foundations of an hexagonal building strikingly similar to so much as remains of the corresponding octagonal structure of Wenlock.

Having the above documents to aid us, it will be possible, from the shattered fragments that remain, to make a pretty complete and accurate restoration of the lavabo of Wenlock, which it will be seen is second in interest to none of the fountains we have mentioned. It must indeed have been one of the most beautiful, as its remains are certainly the most attractive, of these little monuments.

Upon a first examination of the ruins of the lavabo of Wenlock, it was by no means clear exactly what the form of the

fountain had been. The plan (Plate XLVII.) shows its condition at the time of a visit made there in 1884. Of the enclosing octagonal building, measuring about twenty feet in diameter inside, nearly the whole of the foundation exists as shown by the plan, to the height of thirteen inches, where it is

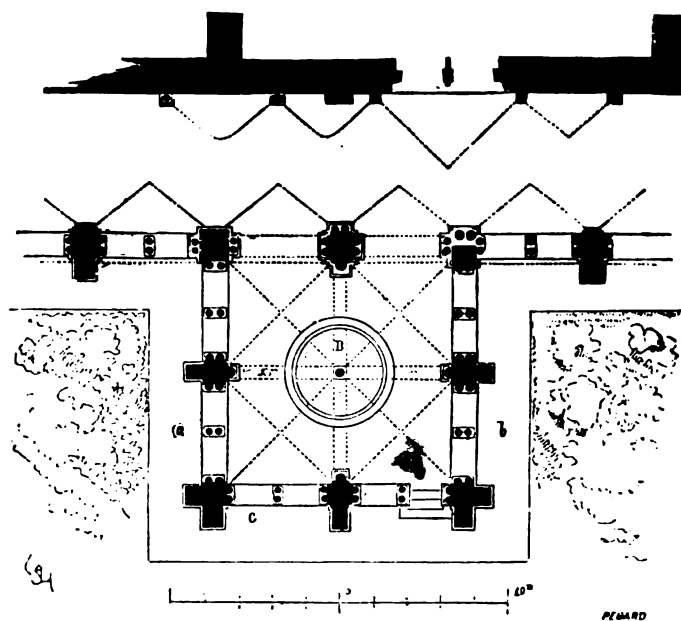


FIG. 1.

most complete. Ranged about on this foundation were various bases of columns and groups of columns, some of which seemed to belong to this little structure, while others seemed to have no assignable connection with it and may probably have been placed here from some other part of the ruins of the priory. In the centre of this enclosure are the remains of the fountain itself, consisting of a circular substructure and numerous fragments ranged upon the top, for the most part without relation to their original position. The substructure rests upon a pavement which projects one foot and two inches from it all around, and which is at present level with the surrounding ground, but which probably originally formed a circular step around the fountain and served as a base for it, which it otherwise lacks. The substructure is ten feet and eight inches in diameter, and two feet and a half high above the step. It is built of rubble, and is faced with slabs cut to the curve and jointed with admirable precision of workmanship. About two thirds of these facing slabs still remain in place. The slabs and all the exterior portions of the fountain are made of a beautiful pinkish fossiliferous marble quarried from the neighboring hills. Two of these slabs are sculptured, one with the scene of Christ walking on the sea, shown on Plate XLV., the other representing two saints, St. John and St. Paul, standing in coupled arches, shown in the restored elevation (Plate XLIX.).

In the centre of the substructure is a circular wellhole, two feet and ten inches in diameter, which is choked with earth to the level of the surrounding ground, at which level it takes a different shape, as shown in plan (Plate XLVII.). From this, in opposite directions, lead ducts about one foot and three inches wide. The sides of the wellhole and of the ducts, to a distance of one foot and five inches on one side, and one foot seven inches on the other, of the wellhole, are carefully plastered in cement. Undoubtedly these originally contained the pipes that supplied the fountain with water and the drains which carried the overflow from the basin. The marble fragments found on the top of the substructure were evidently portions of the circular basin or basins, and were of three kinds: pieces with a simple moulded lip, pieces covered with elaborate carving on one side and hollowed into a series of sinkages or flutes divided by ribs on the other, and pieces slightly fluted on one side and flat on the other. Every one of these fragments was carefully measured. Examina-

tion soon showed that the fragments with the simple, moulded lip were portions of a basin whose radius (allowing for the projection of the moulding) was precisely that of the substructure. This basin, then, fitted directly upon the existing substructure. Some of these fragments fitted together in such a way as to show that this basin was formed of a number of pieces placed side by side, the joints running in radial lines. The joints were cut with precise accuracy, and there was a sinkage at the top of every joint which, undoubtedly, was run in with cement or lead. (See Plate XLVII.) This basin left an unoccupied ring in the centre. How was this originally filled in? And what of the other carved fragments? After much patient puzzling, which occupied the greater part of two days, the carved fragments were fitted together, as shown in Plate XLV., and sketched. They proved to be portions of a basin which, evidently, had been cut out of a single block of marble, and the diameter of the little bead on the lower edge was just a little larger than the inner diameter of the ring of the other basin, showing that it rested upon the latter and formed an inner and upper basin. In the lower part of these fragments of the upper basin spout-holes were found, one of which was still filled with a piece of lead pipe.

But the fragments above described do not comprise all that yet remain of the fountain. The "cloister-room" which formed part of the prior's lodging (see the general plan, Plate VI., No. 1, of the REVIEW) is now used as a place of safe keeping for the more delicate fragments found in the ruins, and here were found portions of three spout-heads, whose dimensions and the character of whose workmanship showed clearly that they belonged to the inner basin of the lavabo, and I was told that they had been found in the mound which, until about five years before my visit, covered what remained of this unique little monument. A front and side view of one of these spout-heads is shown on Plate XLVII., and the others are given on Plate XLIV. The positions of the spout-holes in the inner basin show clearly that the spout-heads were arranged as shown in the restored elevation, Plate XLIX., an arrangement similar to that of the basin of St. Denis already referred to and shown in fig. 2.

No fragments of the central part of the inner basin were found, but the floor of the basin tends to rise toward the centre, as if in preparation for the base of a further central piece. The base "Z" of a group of five colonnettes shown on plan in Plate XLVII. is also of marble, and the character of the little heads (one of which is shown on the upper part of Plate XLVII.), which form the



FIG. 2.

griffes of this group of bases, is so precisely like that of the spout-heads, that it is in all probability the work of the same hand and part of the fountain.

Judging from the analogy of the lavabo of Fontenay (see B, Plate XLVIII.) it seems likely that this group of bases and the colon-

nettes which it carried formed the central and crowning member of the fountain. The capitals may have carried the roof beams or a central post, for the lightness of the walls makes it unlikely that the little structure was vaulted. The timbers of the wooden roof must have rested on the interior angle buttresses, and they may have met on the group of columns in the centre of the fountain, as the vaults meet on the central column of the fountain of Fontenay. The cloister itself probably also had a wooden roof. In

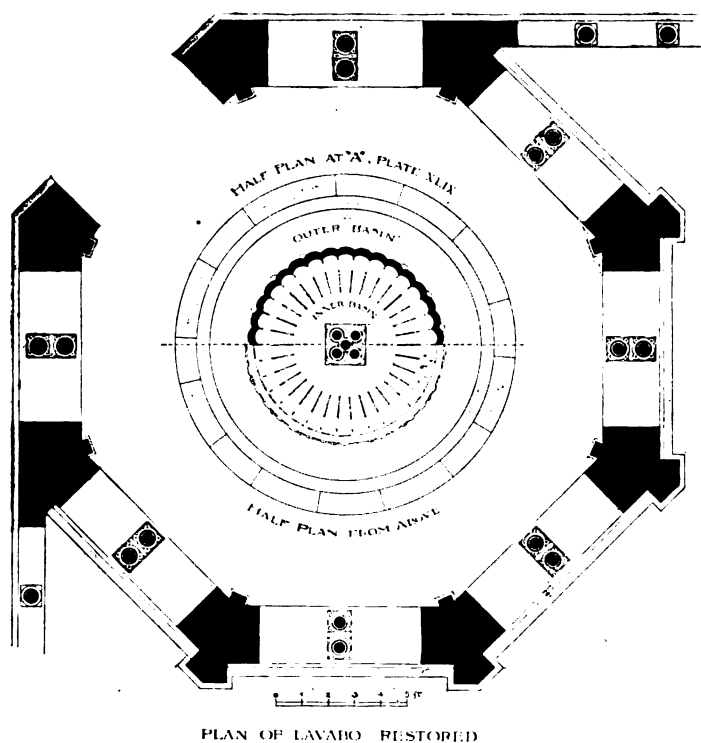


FIG. 3.

the "cloister room" were found, besides the spouts, a number of fragments of capitals and bases, shown on Plate XLVII., and a single pair of coupled columns with their caps and bases in perfect preservation, shown in Plate XLV. The bases of these columns are similar to those shown at "Y" on plan, Plate XLVII. The other capitals and bases of similar size undoubtedly also are parts of similar coupled columns, and it can hardly be doubted that these occupied the centres of the openings of the enclosing structure (as shown in the restored plan, fig. 3) similarly to the single columns of the lavabo of Le Thoronet.

This, then, would complete the structure somewhat as shown in the restored perspective sketch (in Plate XLVIII.). The fountain itself is shown restored as far as it certainly can be, in Plate XLIX., half in elevation, half in section. It will be seen that the inner basin is fluted on the inside like a shell, and these flutes correspond exactly with the swellings on the outside. The whole of this work is executed with admirable precision, the mouldings are of wonderfully beautiful contour, and cut with absolute accuracy and perfect finish, and the carving of the elaborately ornamented inner basin, with its spout-heads, the sculptured figure slabs of the substructure and the capitals of the columns, is of exquisite finish, and shows rare feeling for the beauty both of surface and line. All this makes it of especial interest to inquire to what period the work is probably to be ascribed. In the first place, it is evident at a glance that the work is of French, not of English origin; *i. e.*, it must have been done by French workmen. The character of the carving, the square abaci of the columns, the functional treatment of the carving of the capitals, the griffes of the bases, the exquisite refinement of line and surface,—all are French, not English. Beautiful as some English carving is, it never had just the quality shown in this work. The only possible sign of English influence is in the resemblance of some of the conventional leaf forms to the "early English" foliage; but treated with a variety, a delicacy, an exuberant play of fancy

never shown in English carving. It is more probable, however, that these were among the prototypes, the sources from which the early English Gothic carving originated, than influenced by any English work; for, if French (as it certainly is), this lavabo cannot be later than about 1170 or 1175, and may be a few years earlier; but William of Sens did not begin his work at Canterbury till 1175, and St. Hugh's work at Lincoln was not executed till after 1190. A comparison of the carving on the Wenlock fountain with the piece of carving shown on Plate XLVII., fig. 4 (reproduced from Viollet-le-Duc's "Dictionnaire"), which is a portion of the carving on the side of the central mullion of the west door of the cathedral of Sens, the date of which is between 1165 and 1170, will show clearly the similar character of the two, and that, therefore, the Wenlock fountain must be ascribed to French workmen of about this date.* But how came these French workmen here in England? It must be remembered that Wenlock was a priory of Clunisian monks, dependent on the abbey of La Charité in France, and we have already seen in a previous article how intimate was the connection between the foreign priories in England and the French houses upon which they were dependent or with which they were affiliated. This alone would sufficiently explain the presence of French workmen sent from some affiliated priory in France at the request of the prior of Wenlock for the express purpose, perhaps, of executing this special work. In view of the elaboration which the monks of the twelfth century seem to have delighted to give to their lavabos, and the known intimacy of the connection of Wenlock with France, what seems more likely than this supposition? Besides, the execution of this lavabo falls within the reign of Henry II., himself a Frenchman, and we have already noted the resemblance between the foundation work of the enclosing building of the lavabo of Wenlock, and the similar structure still traceable in front of the hospital of St. Jean at Angers, Henry's capital, a hospital and monastery founded by him, and dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, in 1153, the year of his invasion of England. Already in the foundation charter of this hospital he calls himself "Henricus Dei gratia Rex Angliæ." Is it not possible that the workmen who made the fountain at Angers, which has now disappeared, may have been called to execute also, within the domain of the same monarch, the fountain at Wenlock, whose fragments yet remain to us?

The refectory, opposite whose door the lavabo originally stood, must have been an earlier building than that, some remains of which are still standing, for the beautiful pointed doorway, which with a fragment of wall is all that remains of the refectory, is of the thirteenth century.

It would be of interest to consider in detail other portions of the priory, especially the chapter house and prior's lodge. The latter will be found fully described in Turner & Parker's work on the Domestic Architecture of England, to which reference was made in a previous article, and careful measurements of the exterior were published in 1890 in the *English Builder*.†

The prior's lodge is not only a most beautiful example of English domestic architecture, but the most perfect specimen of this portion of a monastic establishment still existing in England. The Norman chapter house with its richly carved triple-arched entrance, its remains of Norman vaulting, and its rich wall decoration of intersecting arches, is also of unique interest.

H. LANGFORD WARREN.

* It is to be said that the character of the carving of some of the fragments of marble capitals seems to indicate a much later date than the rest of the work, though the forms of the capitals themselves are similar to the others which are distinctly of the same date as the fountain itself. This suggests the possibility that the lavatory building or the cloister may have been subjected to a similar rebuilding with the same materials as took place at the cloister of Elne in the South of France, leading to a similar imitation of earlier forms of capitals by the later carvers, where the original capitals were so broken as to need replacing.

† Mr. Charles Milnes Gaskell, the owner of the priory, in a letter to the publishers, kindly points out that measured drawings of the priory were published in Joseph Potter's "Remains of Ancient Monastic Architecture in England," a work with which I was not familiar.—H. L. W.

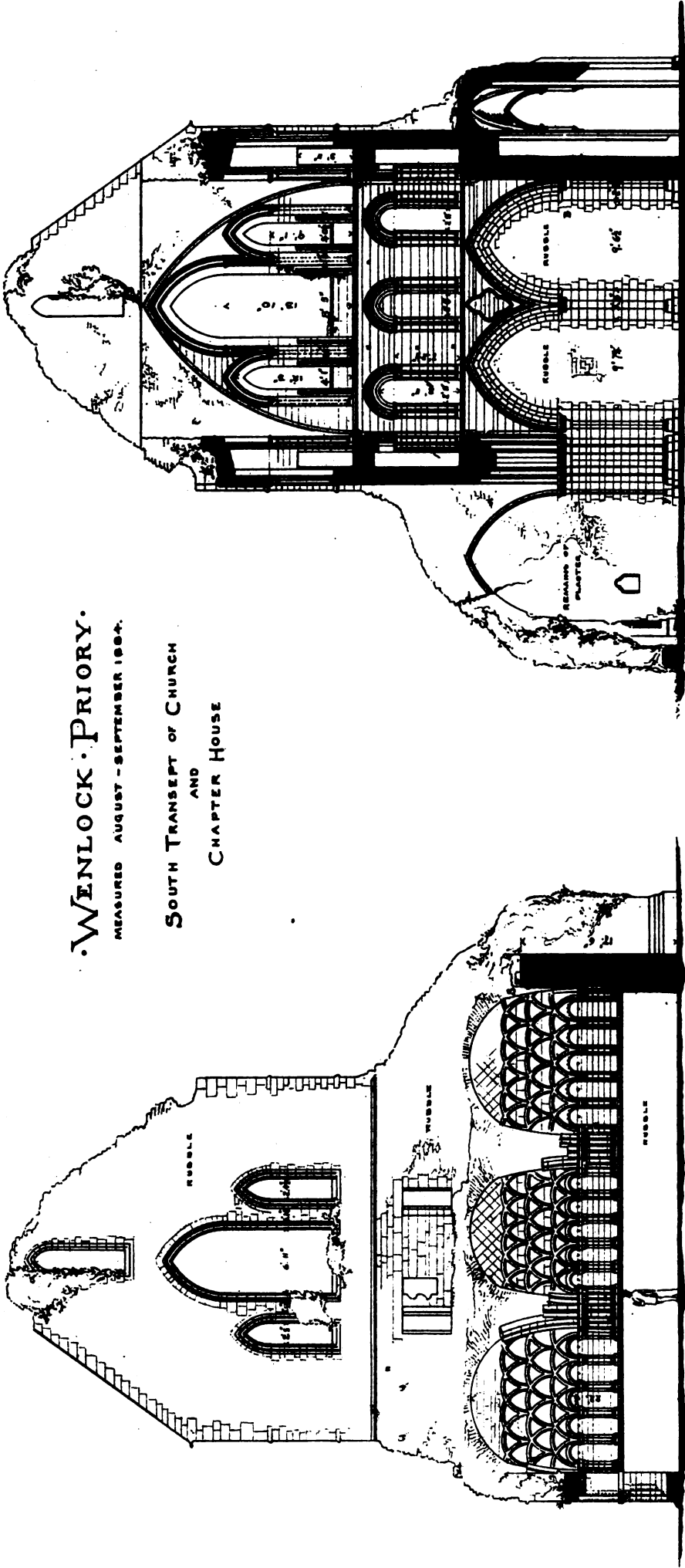


BY H. LANGFORD WARREN.

WENLOCK PRIORY.

MEASURED AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 1884.

SOUTH TRANSEPT OF CHURCH AND CHAPTER HOUSE



SECTION THROUGH CHAPTER HOUSE
AND
EXTERNAL ELEVATION OF SOUTH WALL OF TRANSEPT

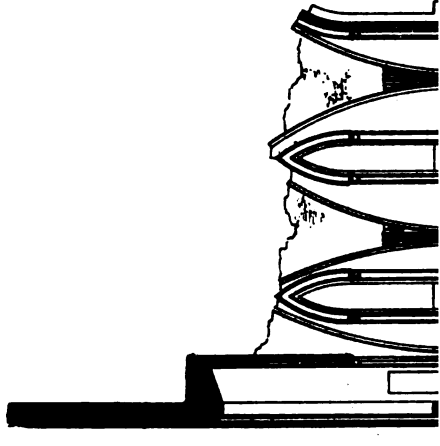
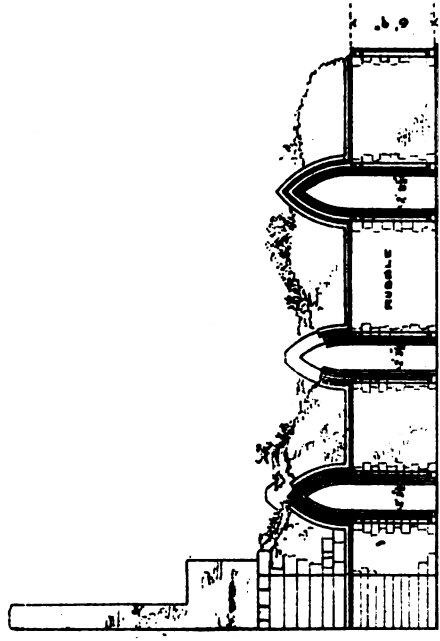
SECTION THROUGH TRANSEPT LOOKING SOUTH

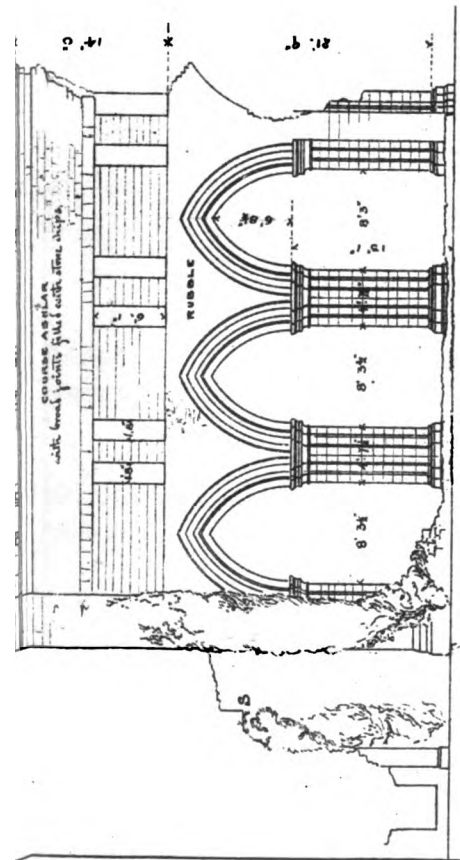
AS of the North Transept only the west wall is still standing as is shown on the plan; and of this only the central bay remains entire. One part of the triforium gallery and one end of the Chapter room of the northern bay and the porch of the first triforium end of the southern. In design it is precisely similar to the South Transept except that the apex of the central piers in triforium arcade are not carried up from the triforium. The Chapter differs in having two shafts headed with the wall and window piers with plain capitals. The North wall of triforium arches under the flying abutment, the whole being a single order and more entirely pointed than in S. Transept.



Triforium Arch

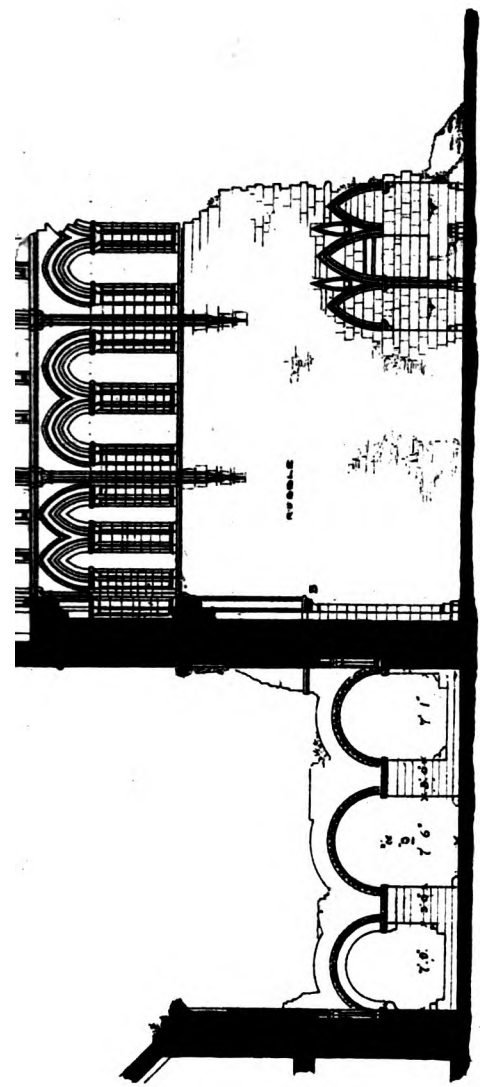
The Design of the fragment of the West which is still entire differs materially from the Transept; but is interesting of the latter. It is in a style of much less perfect preservation than all the wallings and details being almost shapeless. All Ashles work is of soft Sandstone of warm color, many much more decoration. The Public work is of a very hard local limestone.



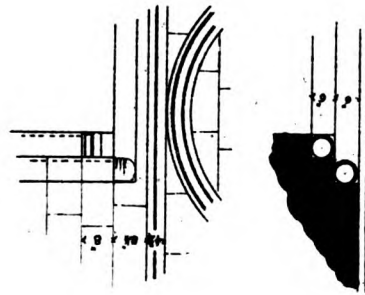


ELEVATION OF TRANSEPT LOOKING WEST

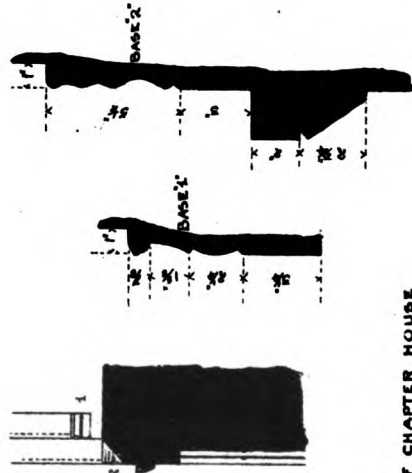
NB For interior Elevation of this Wall see 4th Detail.



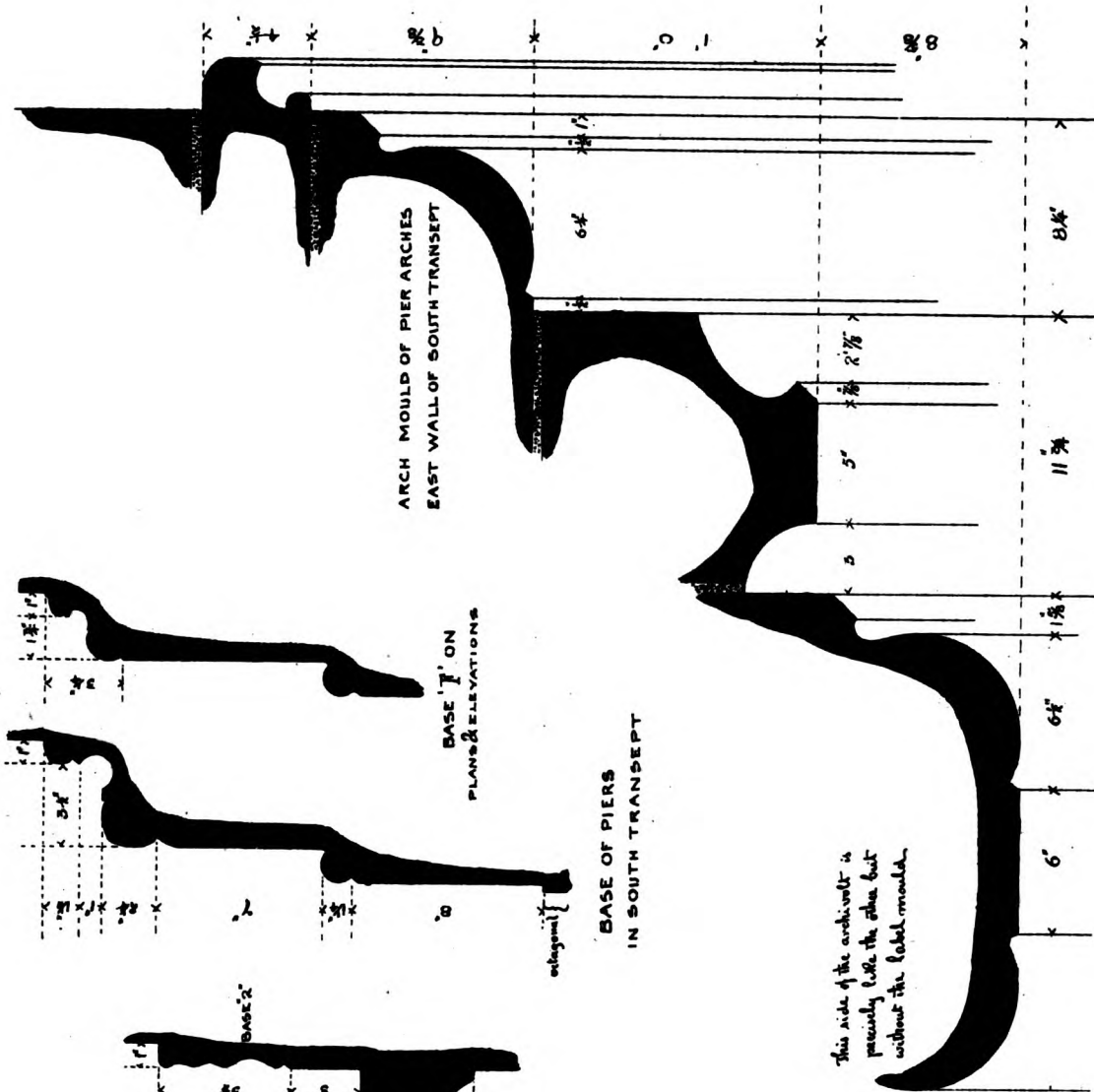
SECTION THROUGH CHAPTER HOUSE AND TRANSEPT LOOKING WEST



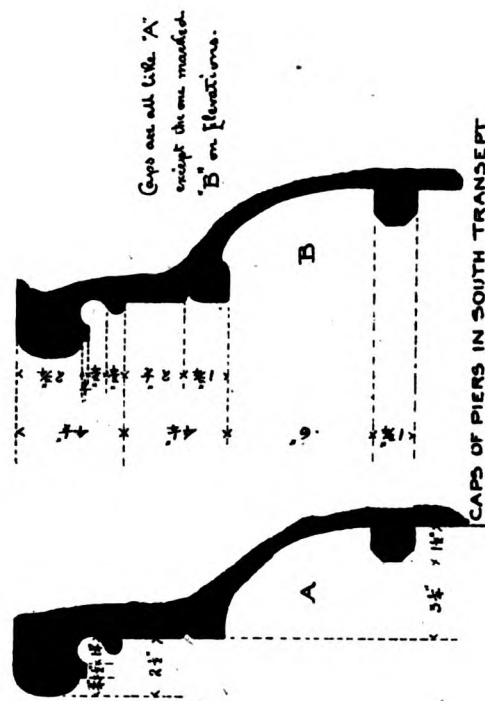
REMAINS OF SILL EAST WALL OF CHAPTER HOUSE
'S' ON ELEVATIONS



BASE 'P' ON
PLANS & ELEVATIONS



ARCH MOULD OF PIER ARCHES
EAST WALL OF SOUTH TRANSEPT

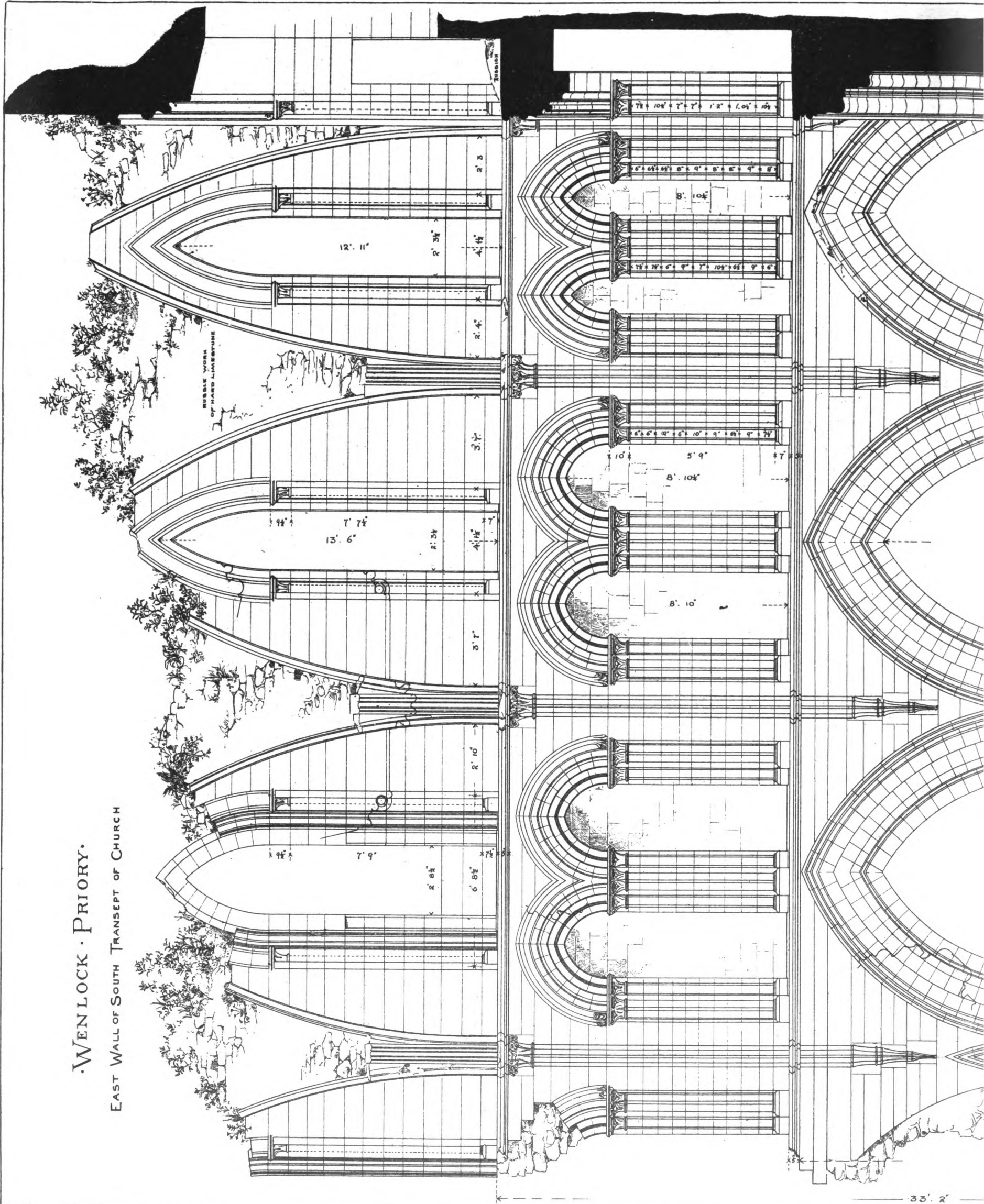


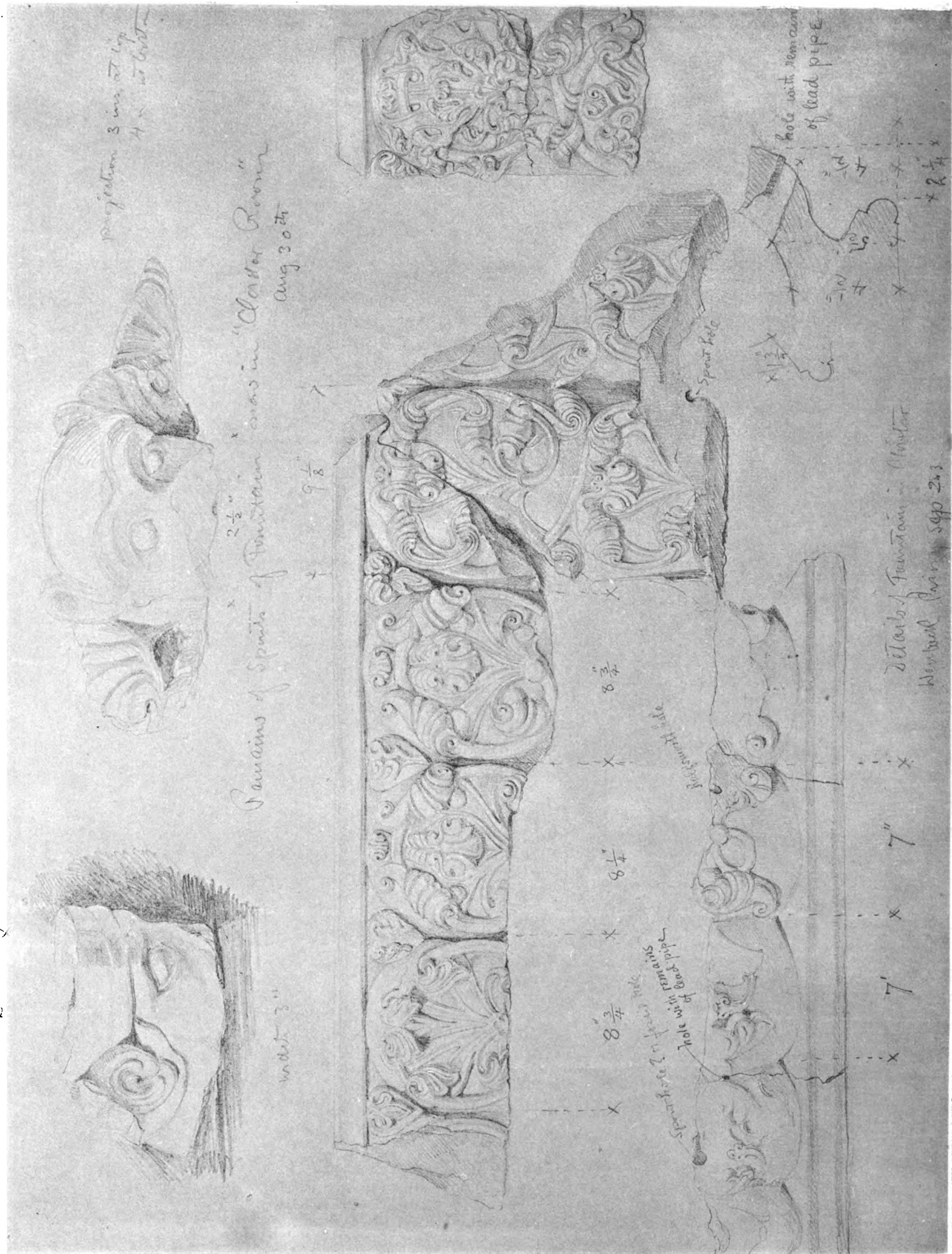
CAPS OF PIERS IN SOUTH TRANSEPT

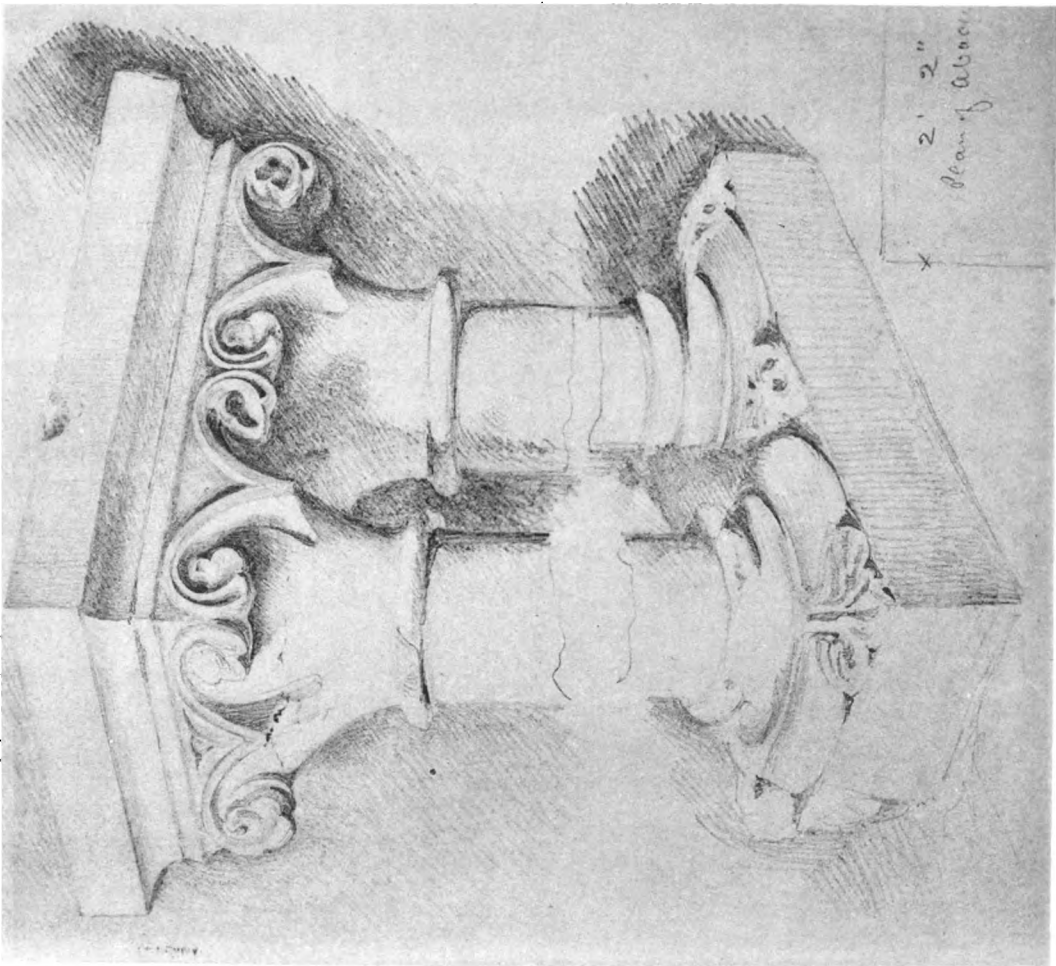
Gaps are all like 'A' except the one marked 'B' on Elevation.

This side of the arch-mould is precisely like the other but without the label mould.

WENLOCK · PRIORY.
EAST WALL OF SOUTH TRANSEPT OF CHURCH







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EXISTING DETAILS OF LAVABO, WENLOCK.

DRAWN BY H. LANGFORD WARREN.

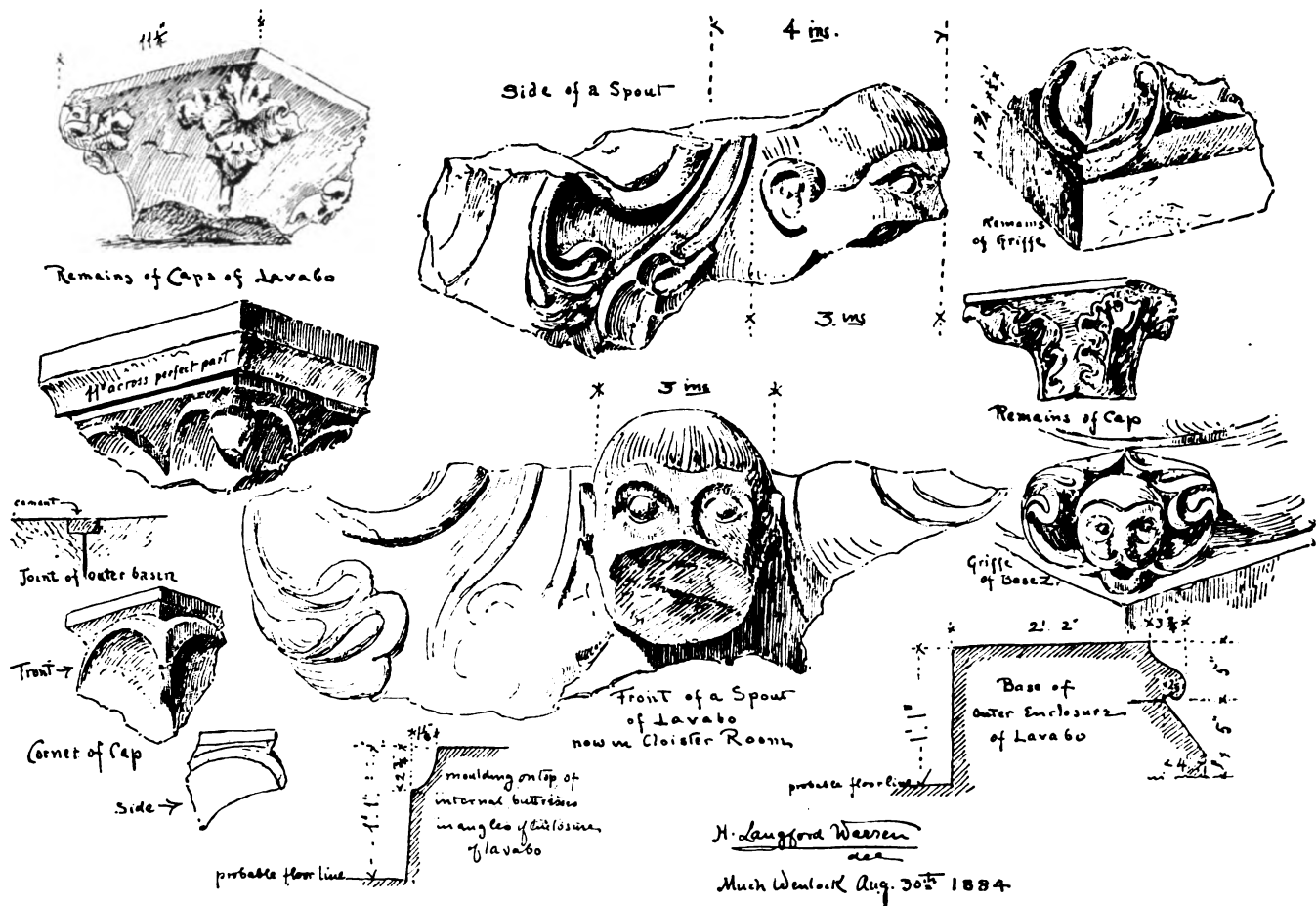
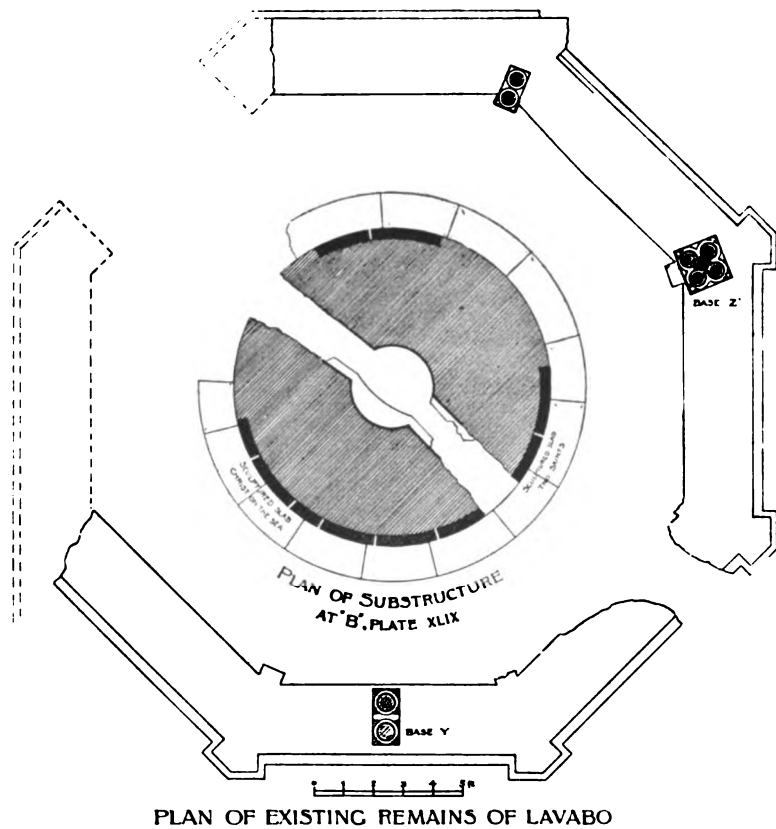
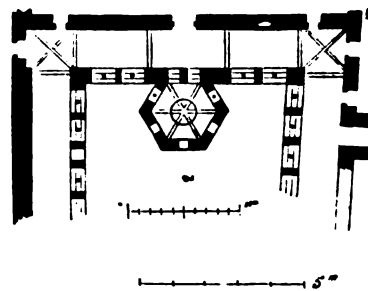
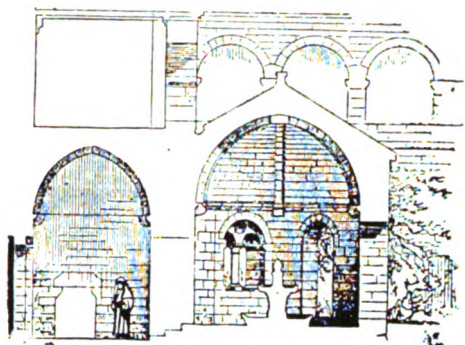
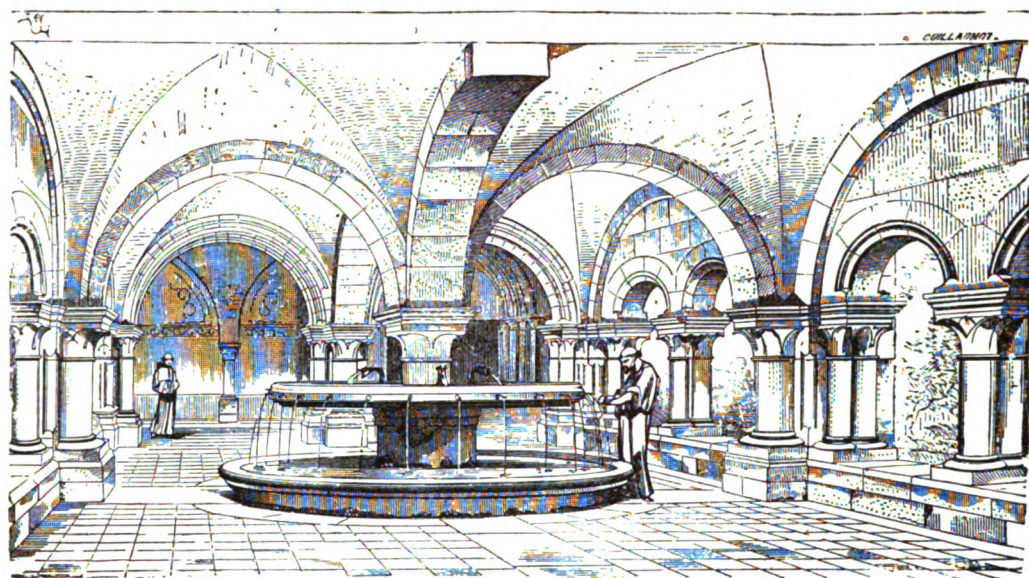


Fig. 4.

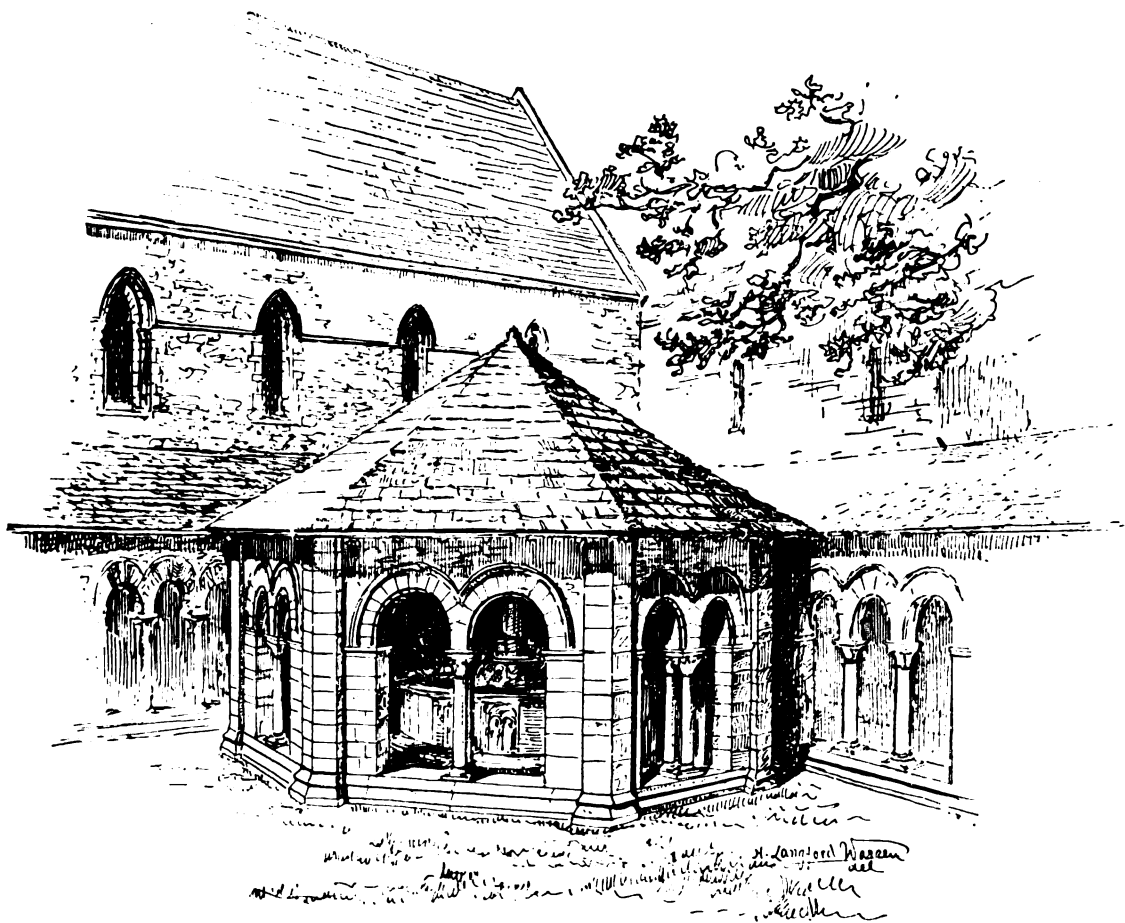




A

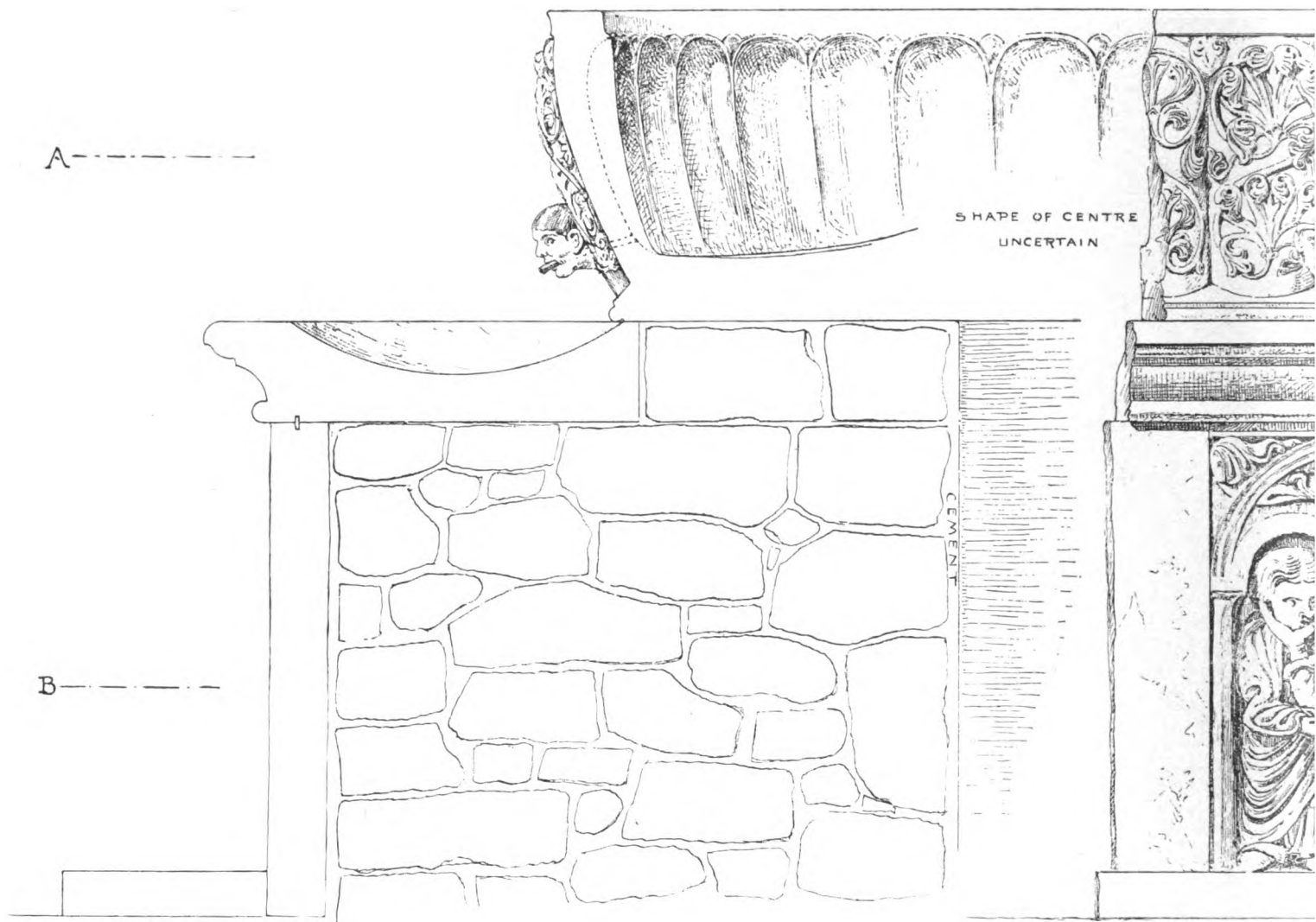


B



C

100





measured and drawn by
H Langford Warren

5 4 3 2 1 0
SCALE OF FEET

LAVABO OF WENLOCK PRIORY.
LANGFORD WARREN.